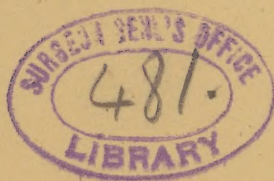


FOSHEY (P. M.)

The fertility of hybrids.



Fosbury (P.M.) Dr. John S. Billings
with author's compliment
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THE FERTILITY OF HYBRIDS.

To the Editor of THE MEDICAL NEWS,

SIR: In your issue of August 13th the interesting paper of Dr. W. A. Dixon contains some ethnologic generalizations which it seems to me will not bear criticism. Dr. Dixon's observations on the tendency of mulatto families in Ohio to die out after the third or fourth generation from constitutional diseases and sterility, when the blood is not freshened by white or negro intermixture, are very valuable, and I am glad that he has recorded them. There is thus added another locality to those already known in which mulattoes are unable long to propagate themselves unaided.

In his statement "that ethnologists mainly agree that human hybridity cannot be maintained without reversion or fresh supply from parent blood," Dr. Dixon is hardly supported by the ethnologists. In the first place, I would like to ask Dr. Dixon to point out an existing human race which is not hybrid. If instead of saying, "Ethnologists have sought in vain among the nations of the earth for a race manifestly hybrid," etc., he had said that ethnologists have sought in vain for a race manifestly unmixed, he would have come nearer the truth. There are, indeed, a number of races "manifestly hybrid, with well-defined characters, intermediate between two known races, perpetuating themselves without the concurrence of the parent races," as, for instance, the Moors, a cross between Arab and Berber.¹ Mixed

¹ Dr. Paul Topinard, *Anthropology*, American edition, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott & Co., p. 371.



breeds of Chinese and Mongolians, of Chinese and Anamites, and of Chinese and Malays have long flourished independently of the parent stocks, and the last, having readily acquired modern civilization, are making rapid strides in progress.¹ Surely Dr. Dixon does not deny the fertility and physical energy of the "half-breeds" (between Europeans and Redskins) of Manitoba and the western States, yet they fulfil his conditions quite exactly. At least two-thirds of modern Mexicans are descended from half-breeds sprung from unions of Spaniards and Aztecs, and they have been fertile for centuries. The fact of a reversion to one or other parent type does not bear upon the question of the fertility or physique of the hybrids.

Topinard² gives so many instances of successful hybridity that it is difficult to understand how so sweeping a statement to the contrary can be maintained. I do not wish to be understood as stating that *all* hybrid races are of uniform fertility—a manifestly erroneous postulate—but merely as denying that "human hybridity cannot be maintained." The cross between Anglo-Saxon and Negro cannot maintain itself in some localities, perhaps in all, but crosses between the dark European races and the Negro flourish in many places.³ The concluding sentence (not quoted) of the paragraph from Topinard quoted by Dr. Dixon does full justice to the present state of our knowledge of the fertility of hybrids: "The fact is, the question has not yet been settled."⁴

Fertility of hybrids, so far as we now know, however, depends much more upon conditions of climate and other environment than upon the mere fact of hybridity. Topinard's own conclusions⁵ are directly opposed to the statement of Dr. Dixon.

¹ Topinard, loc. cit., p. 371.

² Loc. cit., pp. 370-377.

³ Topinard, loc. cit., p. 374; also A. de Quatrefages, *The Human Species*, New York, D. Appleton & Co., p. 263, et seq.

⁴ Loc. cit., p. 375.

⁵ Loc. cit., pp. 376, 377.

Quatrefages¹ notes the Grikas as a hybrid race which increased rapidly, though not mingling with neighboring races. So it is in Tahiti, Marquesas Islands, Manilla, Mindanao, and Brazil.² Nott, while showing that the mulattoes are infertile in South Carolina, at the same time admitted that in Louisiana, Florida, and Alabama they are fertile, robust, and energetic. Hombron says that mulatto men and women in the French colonies are extremely fertile. The mulatto population of the republic of St. Domingo maintains itself easily. There is no need to multiply instances to prove that Dr. Dixon's statement is too broad, though undoubtedly true of mulattoes in certain localities. As to the prevalence of struma, tuberculosis, and carcinoma among mixed races I am not at present prepared to say anything, but hope to be in a future communication.

Dr. Dixon asks if the affections named "prevail among the Jews and other unmixed races," and so falls into the popular error of considering the Jews a race instead of merely a religious sect. Even if the Jews are admitted to be a race, they are certainly not unmixed. The Old Testament is one continuous record of intermarriages between the Hebrews and the surrounding tribes. Their prophets and leaders repeatedly reproved them for mixing with the Canaanites, and thereby bore undying witness that intermarrying took place. From the first to the third centuries of our era the Jews were active as proselytizers, and received into their fold thousands of persons of other races.³ The Jews do not strenuously object to marriages with persons outside of their own sect, provided the Gentile becomes a Jew upon marriage.

Anyone who will look at the Jews as they now come

¹ Loc. cit., p. 262,

² Quatrefages, loc. cit., p. 262.

³ This statement is made upon the authority of Ernest Rénan, but I cannot at present find the passage for reference.

from Europe will readily see that in physical characters they are the most heterogeneous people that ever claimed to be a race. The English, German, Polish, and Russian Jews each, more or less, conform in type to that of the nations among whom they have lived, and the climate or other factors of environment furnish an obviously insufficient cause to account for these resemblances, so that we must conclude that intermixture has always taken place. Marriages between Jew and Gentile occur to-day in the United States, several cases having come under my own observation, and it seems clear that they have always occurred to a greater or less degree wherever the Jew has wandered. Certainly the Jews cannot be regarded as an "unmixed race," and I am not aware of the existence to-day of any unmixed race.

Respectfully,

P. MAX FOSHAY, M.D.

ROCHESTER, N. Y.

DR. P. M. FOSHAY,
282 PROSPECT ST.,
CLEVELAND, - OHIO.

